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SUBJECT: OCTOBER 7 MCNS: MALIKI CALLS FOR RESTRAINED USE OF
FORCE; CLARIFIES POSITION OF BASRAH GOVERNOR

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[¶1.](#) (S) PM Maliki opened the Ministerial Council on National Security (MCNS) with a call for U.S. forces to exercise restraint when engaged in military operations; General Petraeus vigorously defended the actions of U.S. forces and said that GoI is being unduly influenced by militia and terrorist fabrications of events. The DefMin and IntMin gave a generally positive overview of developments in Basrah, with Maliki acknowledging that Waeli remains governor of Basrah pending legal appeals of his dismissal. The MCNS also discussed the need for more detention space, the newly formed committee on displaced persons, reluctance of former Iraqi officers and NCOs to continue military service, improvements to security on the road to Samarra to facilitate re-construction of the Golden Dome Mosque, and coordination of intelligence. END SUMMARY.

Dispelling Innuendo, Maintaining Trust

[¶2.](#) (S) Prime Minister Maliki opened the October 7 MCNS with a reference to recent deaths during an MNF-I pursuit operation in Khalis. Maliki called for an investigation into the reported deaths of non-combatants, expressing serious concern that MNF-I had killed innocent civilians by using excessive force. He strongly urged development of standard operating procedures which would require proportional use of force by coalition forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF).

[¶3.](#) (S) MNF-I Commanding General Petraeus strongly rejected the notion that CF forces in Khalis had operated irresponsibly. He said MNF-I had tracked down and destroyed militia extremists in this engagement and had the video and intelligence to prove that these were not innocent civilians. With considered restraint, he expressed outrage at the insinuation that CF acted without regard for innocent life or that the GOI would put more faith in the word of extremists than that of General Petraeus and those under his command.

Basrah Security Forces

[¶2.](#) (S) Minister of Defense Qadr, joined principally by Minister of Interior al-Bolani, described what they believed was an improving situation in Basrah that will allow Iraqi

authorities to assume control of security and administration in the near future. After prompting from Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Salih and Deputy National Security Advisor (NSA) Safa, they admitted that coordination between the security forces and the local administration still left much to be desired. The DefMin stated that the security forces could not tolerate interference from the local authorities, but that the security forces would support the administration's development plans and service delivery to assure local acceptance of the administration.

13. (S) The IntMin spent considerable time detailing efforts to gain control of the local border police, including transfers and re-training of almost 200 officers. He said this program mirrored a successful MOD program. Maliki noted that the police and the Army are not the same. The IntMin voiced concern that his ministry urgently needed equipment and the personnel to stand up a mechanized force for border control in the Basrah area, telling the PM that all of his forces were under command of General Mohan. The Minister of State for National Security Affairs (MSNS) al-Waeli noted that improved border security on the border with Iran must also include a specific force -- two battalion-sized units that included undersea divers -- for the Shatt al Arab.

14. (S) The Deputy Minister of Justice (MOJ) appealed to the DefMin and IntMin to relinquish their recent appropriation of a newly-constructed prison in Basrah as barracks for Iraqi police. The Ambassador concurred and urged the ministers to quickly resolve the problem due to a critical shortage of prison space. The DefMin and IntMin agreed to review the ISF decision and report back to the MCNS.

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Basrah Governor Holds On

15. (S) Turning to a recent administrative court decision overturning the Basrah Provincial Council's (PC) firing of Governor Waeli, UK Ambassador Prentice asked for the GOI position and guidance. Maliki reluctantly acknowledged that al-Waeli remains the provincial governor but questioned the authority of an administrative court to overturn a PC decision. He vowed a government appeal to national-level courts in order to sustain the decision of the PC to remove Governor Waeli.

16. (S) DefMin told PM Maliki that the ministerial committee on displaced persons was fully formed and ready to begin work. IntMin proposed transfer of responsibility of the committee from the Prime Minister -- who had ordered its formation at the last MCNS (reftel) -- to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration. With minimal discussion, members of the MCNS agreed to the transfer.

17. (S) Deputy NSA Safa lamented that recent recruitment efforts towards former military officers and NCOs had failed to attract as many people as was expected. He pointed out that many of these former soldiers still received government stipends or would soon become eligible for retirement pensions, but subject to their continued service. Commander of Iraqi Joint Forces, General Babakir, said he had expected three-quarters of these personnel to return to duty, but few had done so. He said that many feared for their safety or safety of their families should they return to government service. The Deputy PM, DefMin, and IntMin acknowledged this problem but emphasized these former soldiers were still receiving government paychecks; they needed to make a decision to either return to duty or forfeit their benefits. Deputy PM Salih tasked the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to assess the scope of the problem and report the results to the MCNS.

18. (S) As requested by the Prime Minister at the September 30

MCNS, DefMin Qadr presented his assessment on Samarra security (reftel). He described the ISF brigade stationed there at 90 percent strength and ready to assume security duties. According to Qadr, the major security concern was the highway linking Samarra to Baghdad. The DefMin said his deadline for securing the road and city was January 1, 2008 following completion of fifteen new security checkpoints by the end of December.

19. (S) Although a scheduled briefing on al-Qaeda (AQI) by the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) was supposed to be a straight-forward information exchange, it soon turned into a vigorous discussion about inadequacies of INIS analysis and its intelligence sharing among the security ministries. Deputy PM Salih criticized the briefing as lacking strategic vision, focusing instead on tactical-level intelligence. As the Deputy PM, he wanted to know answers to questions about the current commanders of AQI, their operational command centers, and level of foreign involvement. This briefing, he said, failed to answer any of these questions. The Deputy MOJ expressed concern that the briefing made no mention of AQI operations in Syria, which he called a significant problem. Deputy NSA Safa interrupted the discussion and apologized to the group, saying it was he who had tasked the INIS with the briefing, but had failed to give them specific requirements. Unfortunately, he said, this omission was not limited to his office but was common to all the security ministries in their taskings to INIS. DefMin Qadr said his complaint about the INIS had more to do with process than substance -- they often went directly to the Prime Minister with their intelligence, bypassing both MOD and MOI. IntMin al-Bolani and Deputy PM Salih concluded the discussion by calling for development of a national-level coordination element for intelligence that would provide strategic-level briefings at least once a month to the MCNS.

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